light task), and his generals permanently added Yunnan to the Chinese Empire, bringing to an end the independent, or semi-independent, state which had existed there for centuries—although the native line was continued for a time as Mongol officials. Then, too, Khubilafs envoys went farther than had ever official envoys of China gone before. Embassies were dispatched to Ceylon and South India and even to Madagascar—or at least so Marco Polo declares—but these appear to have been for the purpose not of political conquest but of encouraging trade.

THE REIGN OF KHUBILAi: INTERNAL POLITICS

The spectacular and rapid rise of the Mongol Empire had been a tribute to the genius and energy of the men responsible for it. A greater test of capacity, however, was the task of welding together into some sort of permanent whole the vast area and the great diversity of races and cultures that had been conquered. If in this the Mongols signally failed, it was probably quite as much because of the difficulty of the problem as because of their own lack of ability.

How clearly Khubilai sensed the problem and how deliberate a policy he conceived and adopted for meeting it we do not know. He appears to have been too astute to believe that a great empire like China, even when it had been won by force, could long be held in subjection by that method alone. In practice his policy seems to have been in part one of conciliation of the conquered, in part an attempt at a cosmopolitan blending of races in the government, and in part the promotion of prosperity. He maintained travelling inspectors to report on the economic status of his

subjects. He had public granaries—not a new device in China, as we have seen—in which the surplus grain of good seasons was stored for distribution in years of dearth. He made provision for the public care of aged scholars, orphans, and the infirm, and for the distribution of food among the poor. He encouraged education.

Religiously, Khubilai was tolerant. For himself, he seems to have held to some of the primitive shamanistic practices of his fathers and to have inclined toward Buddhism of the Tibetan type. He had a new Mongol alphabet devised on the basis of the Tibetan script—the old having been taken from that of the